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10 Title: Method and Apparatus for Generating Multi-Level Reference Voltage
in Systems Using Equalization or Crosstalk Cancellation

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CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATION(S)

This application is a continuation-in-part of U.S. Patent Application Serial No. 09/654,643, entitled “Low Latency Equalization in Multi-Level, Multi-Line Communication Systems,” filed September 5, 2000, and, further, of U.S. Patent 5 Application Serial No. 09/655,010, entitled “Method and Apparatus for Calibrating a Multi-Level Current Mode Driver,” filed on September 5, 2000, which claims priority to U.S. Provisional Patent Application Serial No. 60/158,189, entitled “A Method and Apparatus for Receiving High Speed Signals with Low Latency,” filed on October 19, 10 1999, the contents of each of which are incorporated herein by reference. Further, this application claims priority to a PCT Application No. XXXX/XXXXX, entitled “Method and Apparatus for Calibrating a Multi-Level Current Mode Driver and for Generating a Multi-Level Reference Voltage in Systems Using Equalization or Crosstalk Cancellation,” filed on September 5, 2001, the contents of which are incorporated herein by reference. Additionally, the application incorporates in its 15 entirety, U.S. Patent Application Serial No. 09/478,916, entitled “Low Latency Multi-Level Communication Interface,” which claims priority to the U.S. Provisional Patent Application Serial No. 60/158,189, entitled “A Method and Apparatus for Receiving High Speed Signals with Low Latency.”

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

20 The present invention relates generally to the field of electrical buses. More particularly, the present invention relates to a reference voltage generation for an electrical bus with equalization or crosstalk.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Computer systems and other electronic systems typically use buses for interconnecting integrated circuit components so that the components may communicate with one another. The buses frequently connect a master, such as a 5 microprocessor or controller, to slaves, such as memories and bus transceivers. Generally, a master may send data to and receive data from one or more slaves. A slave may send data to and receive data from a master, but not another slave.

Each master and slave coupled to a prior bus typically includes output driver circuitry for driving signals onto the bus. Some prior bus systems have output drivers 10 that use transistor-transistor logic (“TTL”) circuitry. Other prior bus systems have output drivers that include emitter-coupled logic (“ECL”) circuitry. Other output drivers use complementary metal-oxide-semiconductor (“CMOS”) circuitry or N-channel metal-oxide-semiconductor (“NMOS”) circuitry.

While many prior buses were driven by voltage level signals, it has become 15 advantageous to provide buses that are driven by a current mode output driver. A benefit associated with a current mode driver is a reduction of peak switching current. In particular, the current mode driver draws a known current regardless of load and operating conditions. A further benefit is that the current mode driver typically suppresses noise coupled from power and ground supplies.

20 A known current mode driver is shown in U.S. Patent No. 5,254,883 (the “883 patent”), which is assigned to the assignee of the present invention and incorporated herein by reference. The ’883 patent discusses an apparatus and method for setting and maintaining the operating current of a current mode driver. The driver

in the '883 patent includes an output transistor array, output logic circuitry coupled to the transistor array and a current controller coupled to the output logic circuitry.

For one embodiment, the current controller in the '883 patent is a resistor reference current controller. The current controller receives two input voltages, V_{TERM} 5 and V_{REF} , the latter of which is applied to an input of a comparator. V_{TERM} is coupled by a resistor to a node, which is in turn coupled to a second input of the comparator. The voltage at the node is controlled by a transistor array, which is in turn controlled in accordance with an output of the comparator.

When the transistor array is placed in the “off” state, i.e. there is no current 10 flowing through the transistors of the array to ground, the voltage at the node is equal to V_{TERM} . In addition, by using the output of the comparator to adjustably activate the transistor array, the '883 patent shows that the voltage at the node may be driven to be approximately equal to the reference voltage, V_{REF} .

Knowing the value of V_{REF} and V_{TERM} , the current mode driver of the '883 15 patent therefore provides a binary signaling scheme utilizing a symmetrical voltage swing about V_{REF} . Specifically, in a first current state (the “off” state), the current mode driver is not sinking current and the signal line (or bus line) is at a voltage, $V_o = V_{TERM}$, representing a logical “0.” In a second current state (the “on” state), the current mode driver is sinking current to drive the voltage on the signal line (or bus 20 line) to be:

$$V_o = V_{TERM} - 2(V_{TERM} - V_{REF}).$$

The second state therefore representing a logical “1.”

While the binary signal levels are commonly used, the use of multi-level signals is a known technique for increasing the data rate of a digital signaling system. Such multi-level signaling is sometimes known as multiple pulse amplitude modulation or multi-PAM, and has been implemented with radio or other long-distance wireless signaling systems. Other long-distance uses for multi-PAM signaling include computer or telecommunication systems that employ Gigabit Ethernet over optical fiber and over copper wires, which use three and five signal levels, respectively.

Additionally, multi-PAM signaling may be used for communication between devices in close proximity or belonging to the same system, such as those connected to the same integrated circuit (“IC”) or printed circuit board (“PCB”). In such systems, the characteristics of transmission lines, such as buses or transmission lines, over which the signals travel are tightly controlled, so that the increase in the data rate may be increased by increasing the transmit frequency. However, at higher frequencies, receiving devices may have a reduced ability to distinguish binary signals. Further, for cases in which attenuation of a signal exists between transmission and reception, different amounts of signal loss may occur depending upon the magnitude of transition between logic states. To compensate for the attenuation of the received signal, different equalization signals may be added to the main signal when driving different transitions in order to add predetermined high-frequency components to the transition signals that raise the slope of the edge of the transition. However, a difficulty with this approach for a typical multi-PAM system is that the voltage can only be pulled down from the V_{TERM} , unless negative current

could flow through current sources. To allow overdriving a transition with the equalization signals, the highest logic state may, therefore, be reduced below V_{TERM} . This may cause the respective reference voltages to be no longer centered on the shifted data eyes.

5 Further, in a system that has numerous closely spaced signal lines, such as a bus for a computer device or a similar device, crosstalk may exist between nearby lines. As is known in the art, crosstalk is a disturbance caused by the electric or magnetic fields of one telecommunication signal and impairs signals on adjacent signal lines. Crosstalk characteristics on a bus may be based upon how many lines are
10 between a crosstalk creator and a signal line being affected by crosstalk. One method for crosstalk cancellation has been described in the co-pending U.S. Patent Application entitled “Low Latency Equalization in Multi-Level, Multi-Line Communication Systems,” identified above. Similarly to the equalization mechanism, the crosstalk cancellation provides high frequency component signal and, thus, the
15 highest logic state of the system is typically reduced below V_{TERM} , causing reference voltage levels to be no longer centered on the shifted data eyes.

Thus, it is still desirable to develop a method and system for reference voltage generation that would track the logic state shifts due to equalization or crosstalk.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

A multi-level driver uses multiple pulse amplitude modulation (multi-PAM) output drivers to send multi-PAM signals. A multi-PAM signal has two or more voltage levels, with each data interval now transmitting a "symbol" at one of the valid 5 voltage levels. In one embodiment, a symbol represents two or more bits. The multi-PAM output driver drives an output symbol on a signal line. The output symbol preferably represents at least two bits that include a most significant bit (MSB) and a least significant bit (LSB). A multi-PAM receiver receives the output symbol from the signal line and determines the MSB and the LSB.

10 In accordance with one aspect of the invention, a reference voltage generator for a driver, such as a current driver, is provided. The current driver includes at least one reference voltage level, at least one current control signal, and at least one active device coupled to a selected reference voltage level of the at least one reference voltage level and the at least one current control signal. The active device shifts the at 15 least one reference voltage level based on the at least one current control signal such as an equalization signal or a crosstalk cancellation signal. In one embodiment, the current driver is arranged to operate in a 2-PAM mode, a 4-PAM mode, or an N-PAM mode.

In accordance with another aspect of the invention, a method for generating a 20 plurality of reference voltage levels for a driver is provided. The method includes providing at least one reference voltage level, providing at least one current control signal, and adjusting the at least one reference voltage level based on the at least one current control signal. In one embodiment, the at least one reference voltage level is

generated on a resistive voltage divider or a reference voltage driver. Further, the at least one current control signal may include, for example, an equalization current control signal or a crosstalk cancellation signal.

These as well as other aspects and advantages of the present invention will

5 become more apparent to those of ordinary skill in the art by reading the following detailed description, with reference to the accompanying drawings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Exemplary embodiments of the present invention are described with reference to the following drawings, in which:

Figure 1 is a block diagram of a memory controller, bus and memories
5 utilizing an output driver in accordance with a preferred embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 2 illustrates a preferred encoding scheme utilizing a multi-level voltage reference for use with a multi-level output driver;

10 Figure 3 is a signaling device that may be used to create the multi-level voltage reference of Figure 2;

Figure 4 is an electrical schematic of an on-chip, multi-level reference voltage generator utilizing a resistive voltage divider;

Figure 5 is an alternative electrical schematic of an on-chip, multi-level reference voltage generator utilizing a resistive voltage divider;

15 Figure 6 illustrates attenuation affecting the transitory level obtained by a step;

Figure 7 illustrates addition of equalization signal to the logic state transitions affected by signal attenuation in Figure 6;

Figure 8 is an encoding scheme utilizing a multi-level voltage reference where the logic levels are shifted to allow for overdrive signals;

20 Figure 9 illustrates a device that can provide overdrive signals to compensate for signal attenuation;

Figure 10 illustrates a general equalization system for a signal line, including a self-equalization FIR filter and a number of crosstalk equalization FIRs;

Figure 11A illustrates a signal transition that may create crosstalk on adjacent signal lines;

Figure 11B illustrates crosstalk noise from the signal transition of Figure 11A, imposed on a signal in an adjacent line;

5 Figure 11C illustrates an equalization signal that compensates for the crosstalk noise shown in Figure 11B;

Figure 11D illustrates a first component of the equalization signal shown in Figure 11C;

10 Figure 11E illustrates a second component of the equalization signal shown in Figure 11C;

Figure 12 is a signal driver, self-equalization and crosstalk equalization communication device;

15 Figure 13 is an electrical schematic of an on-chip, multi-level reference voltage generator utilizing a resistive voltage divider, where the multi-level reference voltage reflects logic state shifts;

Figure 14 is an electrical schematic of a multi-level reference voltage generator utilizing op-amp drivers, where the multi-level reference voltage reflects logic state shifts;

20 Figure 15 is an electrical schematic of an on-chip multi-level reference voltage generator utilizing on-chip drivers, where the multi-level reference voltage reflects logic state shifts; and

Figure 16 is a flow chart illustrating an exemplary method for generating at least one reference voltage level for a driver using equalization and crosstalk cancellation.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT(S)

In Figure 1, a bus 320 interconnects a memory controller 321 and memories 322. The bus 302 is formed of signal lines 320-1, 320-2 that transmit address, data and control signals. Physically, on each integrated circuit 321, 322, the address, data and control signals are supplied to and output from external connections, called pins, and the bus 320 interconnects respective pins. The bus 320 may be implemented as traces on a printed circuit board, wires or cables and connectors. Each of these integrated circuits 321, 322 has bus output driver circuits 323 that connect to the pins to interface with the bus 320 to transmit signals to other ones of the integrated circuits.

5 In particular, the bus output drivers 323 in the memory controller 321 and in the memories 322 transmit data over the bus 320. Each bus output driver 323 drives a signal line of the bus 320. For example, bus output driver 323-1 in the memory controller 321 drives bus line 320-1. The bus 320 supports signaling with characteristics that are a function of many factors such as the system clock speed, the bus length, the amount of current that the output drivers can drive, the supply voltages, the spacing and width of the wires or traces making up the bus 320, the physical layout of the bus itself and the resistance of a terminating resistor Z_0 attached to each bus.

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At least a subset of the signal lines connect to pull-up resistors Z_0 that connect to a termination voltage V_{TERM} . In some systems, all signal lines connect to pull-up resistors Z_0 , that, in turn, connect to the termination voltage V_{TERM} . The termination voltage V_{TERM} may be different than the supply voltage V_{DD} or not. The termination resistors can be off-chip or on-chip. In one embodiment, the supply voltage V_{DD} is

equal to 2.5 volts, the termination voltage V_{TERM} is equal to 1.8 volts, the bus voltage for a signal at low levels V_{LO} is equal to 1.0 volts, and the voltage swing is 0.8 volts. The resistance of the terminating resistors Z_0 , for this embodiment, is equal to twenty-eight ohms.

5 The output drivers 323 are designed to drive the bus 320 with a predetermined amount of current, and a number of bus receivers 324 are designed to receive the signals sent by the bus drivers 323 on the bus 320. In a device, each bus receiver 324 receives signals from one signal line of the bus 320. The bus receivers 324 are integrating receivers according to the preferred embodiments.

10 In one embodiment, the memories are random access memories (RAMs). In an alternative embodiment, the memories are read-only memories (ROMs). Alternatively, the bus output drivers 323 and bus receivers 324 of the present invention are implemented in other semiconductor devices that use a bus to interconnect various types of integrated circuits such as microprocessors and disk controllers.

15 In another alternative embodiment, the output drivers are implemented in a point-to-point system rather than a bus system. Although a bus that uses current mode signaling has been described with respect to Figure 1, the apparatus and method of the present invention may be used in any signaling system where it is desirable to 20 distinguish between signals having different voltage levels.

Referring back to Figure 1, in previously known implementations of the bus system, signals transmitted on each signal line of the bus have either of two voltage levels representing a binary zero or one for binary digital communication. For

example, an output voltage equal to the voltage level V_{TERM} set by the voltage source at one end of the termination resistor Z_0 may represent a binary zero. And, an output voltage level equal to $V_{TERM} - (I \cdot Z_0)$ may represent a binary one, where the output driver circuit 323 sinks an amount of current equal to I . In this way, the bus driver circuits 323 can be implemented as switched current sources that sink current when driving binary one's onto the signal lines. When receiving data, the receiver circuits 324 detect whether the voltage on the signal line is greater than or less than $V_{TERM} - 0.5(I \cdot Z_0)$, i.e. the midpoint between a logical zero and a logical one, to determine whether the data is a binary zero or one, respectively. In one embodiment, data is transmitted and received on each edge of the system clock to achieve a data rate equal to twice the frequency of the system clock. In an alternative embodiment, data is transmitted once per clock cycle of the system clock.

The output drivers 323 and receivers 324 can operate in either 2-PAM or 4-PAM mode. In one embodiment, the control, address and data signals use the same multi-PAM mode, such as 4-PAM. However, because 4-PAM may be more susceptible to errors from noise than 2-PAM, to improve system reliability, in another embodiment, signals on the bus may use the 2-PAM mode. Additionally, data may alternate between the 2-PAM and 4-PAM mode. For example, a pattern generator may be coupled to the memory controller 321 and may be used to periodically determine whether to operate the system at 2-PAM or 4-PAM. In one embodiment, the pattern generator may be arranged to periodically determine an error rate in the system, and if the error rate is above a predetermined threshold, 2-PAM signaling may be used.

Hereinafter, systems and method for generation reference voltages will be described in reference to multi-PAM systems. However, it should be understood that the methods and systems are equally applicable in 2-PAM systems.

As used herein, the term multi-level signaling refers to signaling schemes 5 utilizing two or more signal levels. Multi-level signaling may also be referred to herein as multiple level pulse amplitude modulation, or multi-PAM, signaling, because the preferred coding methods are based upon the amplitude of the voltage signal. Other known multi-level signaling techniques may alternatively be used. Further, although the multi-level signaling of the preferred embodiments will be 10 described with respect to a current source drivers, different or equivalent drivers could also be used.

Output drivers 323 generate, and receivers 324 detect, multi-PAM signals that allow multiple (k) bits to be transmitted or received as one of 2^k possible voltages or data symbols at each clock edge or once per clock cycle. For example, one preferred 15 embodiment is a 4-PAM system in which two bits are represented by 2^2 or four voltage levels, or data symbols, and the two bits are transferred at every clock edge by transferring an appropriate one of the four voltage levels. Therefore, the data rate of a 4-PAM system is twice that of a binary or 2-PAM system.

In Figure 2, a graph shows one embodiment utilizing a 4-PAM signaling 20 scheme. Specifically, the multi-PAM voltage levels are associated with two-bit binary values or symbols such as 00, 01, 10 and 11. In the embodiment of Figure 2, the binary values are assigned to voltage levels using Gray coding, i.e. the symbol sequence from the highest voltage level to the lowest voltage level is 00, 01, 11, 10.

Gray coding provides the advantage of reducing the probability of dual-bit errors because only one of the two bits changes at each transition between voltage levels. If a received 4-PAM voltage symbol is misinterpreted as an adjacent symbol, a single-bit error will occur.

5 The y-axis of the graph in Figure 2 shows 4-PAM output voltages V_{OUT} for each symbol. To provide the appropriate voltage to transmit a 4-PAM symbol, the output driver sinks a predetermined amount of current for that symbol. In particular, each symbol is associated with a different amount of current. To transmit the symbol "00", the output driver 323 sinks no current and the signal line is pulled up to V_{TERM} .

10 To transmit the symbol "01", the bus output driver 323 sinks a predetermined amount of current I_{01} to cause the output voltage V_{OUT} to equal $V_{TERM} - \frac{1}{3} \cdot (I \cdot Z_o)$, where I_{01} is equal to $\frac{1}{3} I$. To transmit the symbol "11", the bus output driver 323 sinks a predetermined amount of current I_{11} to cause the output voltage V_{OUT} to equal $V_{TERM} - \frac{2}{3} \cdot (I \cdot Z_o)$, where I_{11} is equal to $\frac{2}{3} I$. To transmit the symbol "10", the bus output

15 driver 323 sinks a predetermined amount of current I_{10} to cause the output voltage V_{OUT} to equal $V_{TERM} - (I \cdot Z_o)$.

20 A 4-PAM receiver identifies a received symbol based on a voltage range or range of voltages associated with that symbol. A set of reference voltages such as V_{REFLO} , V_{REFM} and V_{REFHI} functions as voltage thresholds to define ranges of voltages associated with each 4-PAM symbol. The reference voltages V_{REFLO} , V_{REFM} and V_{REFHI} are typically set at the midpoint voltage between neighboring symbols. For example, the symbol "00" is associated with voltages greater than V_{REFHI} . The symbol "01" is associated with voltages falling within the range between V_{REFHI} and V_{REFM} .

The symbol "11" is associated with a range of voltages from V_{REFM} to V_{REFLO} . The symbol "10" is associated with a range of voltages less than V_{REFLO} . The reference voltages V_{REFHI} , V_{REFM} and V_{REFLO} are threshold voltages from which a multi-PAM data symbol is determined to be one of the four possible data symbols.

5 4-PAM symbols or signals also allow for direct compatibility with 2-PAM or binary signaling. When operating in 4-PAM mode, the received data bits are compared to the three reference voltages, V_{REFHI} , V_{REFM} and V_{REFLO} to determine the 4-PAM symbol and the associated two bits. Because the most significant bit (MSB) is determined by comparing the received data bit to V_{REFM} , i.e., the MSB is zero for 10 voltages greater than V_{REFM} and the MSB is one for voltages less than V_{REFM} , the multi-PAM system can be used as a 2-PAM system by ignoring the least significant bit (LSB) and using the MSB. Alternatively, to transmit 2-PAM symbols using the gray code of Figure 2, the LSB is set equal to zero (low), while the MSB determines the output voltage. More information on 2-PAM and multi-PAM systems may be 15 found in the co-pending U.S. Patent Application entitled "Low Latency Multi-Level Communication Interface," identified above and incorporated herein in its entirety and identified above.

Further, although the circuits described herein use 4-PAM signaling, the 20 embodiments described can be expanded for use in 8-PAM, 16-PAM and, more generally, N-PAM signaling. Accordingly, it is to be understood that the preferred embodiments are not limited to 4-PAM signaling, but rather may be applied to the general, N-PAM signaling, case.

Figure 3 shows a representation of a communication system that may be used to create voltage levels of Figure 2. An output driver 420 drives signals to an output pad 418 and over a transmission line 416, which may, for example, be a memory bus or a different interconnection between devices affixed to a circuit board, to be received at a pad 425. The transmission line 416 has a characteristic impedance Z_0 that is substantially matched to a terminating resistor Z_0 429 to minimize reflections. The output driver includes a first transistor current source 421, a second transistor current source 422, and a third transistor current source 423, which collectively produce a current I when all active, pulling the voltage at the pad 425 down from V_{TERM} by $I \cdot Z_0$, signaling the logical state 10 under the Gray code system. To produce voltage $V_{OUT} = V_{TERM}$, signaling the logical state 00, current sources 421, 422, and 423 are all turned off. To produce voltage V_{OUT} equal to $V_{TERM} - 1/3 (I \cdot Z_0)$, signaling the logical state 01, one of the current sources is turned on, and to produce voltage V_{OUT} equal to $V_{TERM} - 2/3 (I \cdot Z_0)$, two of the current sources are turned on.

Figure 4 illustrates an exemplary 4-PAM reference voltage generator 500 that generates the multi-PAM reference voltages V_{REFHI} , V_{REFM} and V_{REFLO} from external voltages, V_{TERM} and V_{REF} , supplied on input pins 502 and 504 respectively. Unity gain amplifiers 506, 508 receive and output the input voltages V_{TERM} and V_{REF} respectively. A voltage divider, including series-connected resistors R1, R2 and R3, is coupled between the outputs of the unity gain amplifiers 506 and 508. The lowest voltage V_{REF} is selected to drive V_{REFLO} via a power driver 514. Power drivers 510, 512 are coupled between resistors R1, R2 and R3 to provide reference voltages V_{REFHI}

and V_{REFM} respectively. The power drivers 510-514 are connected as unity gain amplifiers.

In one embodiment, the resistor values are selected such that resistors R2 and R3 have twice the resistance of resistor R1, and V_{REF} , which is supplied externally, is equal to the desired V_{REFLO} voltage.

Figure 5 illustrates an alternative embodiment of a 4-PAM reference voltage generator 500 for generating the multi-PAM reference voltages V_{REFHI} , V_{REFM} , and V_{REFLO} from the external voltage V_{TERM} supplied on an input pin 602. A voltage divider, including series-connected resistors R1, R2, R3, and R4, is coupled between the V_{TERM} and a ground voltage supplied on an input pin 602. In one embodiment, the resistor values are chosen so that the compromise between the static power consumption and noise immunity is achieved. Thus, the resistor values may be selected so that not too much static power is burned, and, further, so that reference voltages are not susceptible to noise injection. However, it should be understood that the reference voltage generation is not limited to the use of the voltage generators illustrated in Figure 4 or Figure 5, and different or equivalent reference voltage generators may alternatively be used.

For cases in which attenuation of a signal exists between the signal's reception and transmission, different amounts of signal loss may occur depending upon the magnitude of the transition between logic levels. Figure 6 illustrates attenuation affecting the transitory level obtained by a step. For instance, transitioning between the 10 state and the 00 state may have a greater signal deficiency than a transition between the 11 state and the 00 state, which in turn may have a greater signal

deficiency than a transition between the 01 state and the 00 state, while maintaining the same logic state over plural bit periods may have no attenuation error. Thus, while the correct dc-level will eventually be achieved, each transition between states may have a different error associated with it.

5 Figure 7 illustrates the addition of a different equalization signal 3S, 2S, or S to the main signal when driving different transitions to compensate for the attenuation of the received signal. The equalization signal in this embodiment are transitory, so that each signal may, for example, have a duration less than or equal to one bit signal, after which the equalization signal is terminated, allowing the initially overdriven 10 signal to maintain a steady state logic level. In other words, the equalization signals S, 2S or 3S add predetermined high-frequency components to the transition signals that raise the slope of the edge of transition. However, a difficulty with this approach for a system such as shown in Figure 3 is that the voltage can only be pulled down from the 15 V_{TERM} , unless negative current could flow through the current sources 421, 422, and 423. In other words, with the 00 level set at the V_{TERM} , as illustrated in Figure 2, it is difficult for the equalization signals S, 2S or 3S to add to the transition above the 20 V_{TERM} .

Figure 8 depicts a multi-level (4-PAM) signaling system in which the 00 logic is reduced below V_{TERM} by a predetermined amount in order to allow overdriving a 20 transition, for example, from the 10 state to the 00 state by a predetermined equalization signal such as 3S via release of the pulldown current. This 00 logic level may be provided by having none of the main current drivers turned on and three equalization drivers turned on, to produce a voltage level of 0M+3S. The logical state

10 can be pulled lower, if necessary, to overdrive a transition, and it is characterized by having three main drivers turned on, for a total voltage level of 3M+0S. The logical state 01 is pulled down and may have a voltage of 1M+2S, while the state 11 may have a voltage of 2M+1S.

5 Table 1 illustrates drive signal levels involved in transitioning between the logical states of Figure 8.

From	To	First Received Signal	Transition drive Signal	Second Received Signal
00	10	0M+3S	3M+3S	3M+0S
00	11	0M+3S	2M+3S	2M+1S
00	01	0M+3S	1M+3S	1M+2S
01	00	1M+2S	0M+2S	0M+3S
01	11	1M+2S	2M+2S	2M+1S
01	10	1M+2S	3M+2S	3M+0S
11	00	2M+1S	0M+1S	0M+3S
11	01	2M+1S	1M+1S	1M+2S
11	10	2M+1S	3M+1S	3M+0S
10	00	3M+0S	0M+0S	0M+3S
10	01	3M+0S	1M+0S	1M+2S
10	11	3M+0S	2M+0S	2M+1S

Table 1.

In order to transition from the initial state 00 (0M+3S) to the final state 10 (3M+3S), for example, an overdriven transition drive signal of 3M+3S is provided. 10 Conversely, changing from the initial state 10 (3M+0S) to the final state 00 involves a drive signal of 0M+0S. Table 1 illustrates one set of transition drive signals specific to a 4-PAM signaling system with a single error correction. However, it should be understood that the illustrated set of transition signals may be extrapolated to be used with communication systems having additional signal levels and additional error 15 corrections. Further, it should be understand that similar transition drive signals could also be used in 2-PAM systems with equalizaiton.

Figure 9 is a schematic block diagram illustrating an exemplary device that may provide the transition drive signals shown in Figure 8. An encoder 702 receives binary MSB and binary LSB signals and converts pairs of those 2-PAM signals into digital input signals along lines C1, C2 and C3 for a main driver 705 having three current sources 705, 712, and 713, to convert the binary data of the MSB and LSB into 4-PAM data at an output pad 715. As illustrated in Figure 9, a delay mechanism 718 also receives the input signals from the encoder 702. The delay mechanism 718 inverts and delays the input signals by a one-bit signal period to feed signals E1, E2, and E3 to an auxiliary driver 720 including auxiliary driver current sources 721, 722, and 723 that are similar to the respective main driver current sources 711, 712 and 713. However, each auxiliary driver current source 721, 722, and 723 has a gain that is a fraction of the respective main driver current sources 711, 712, and 713. Thus, when the main driver 705 outputs an output signal, the auxiliary driver 720 outputs a signal that is delayed, inverted and proportional to the output signal of the driver 705. The signals generated by the driver 705 and 720 combine at the line 728 to form a desired signal. A detailed description of a preferred equalization system can be found in the co-pending U.S. Patent Application Serial No. 09/654,643, entitled "Low Latency Equalization in Multi-Level, Multi-Line Communication Systems," identified above. The preferred embodiments, however, are applicable to systems using other types of equalization, and the invention should not be construed as limited to systems including the described equalization methods.

Referring to Table 1, the main driver 705 can be represented with the letter M and the auxiliary driver 720 can be represented with the letter S, with the numeral

proceeding each letter describing how many of the respective current sources are active. A ratio of the gain of the auxiliary driver, S, to that of the main driver, M, is termed k, the equalization coefficient of the auxiliary driver. The ratio k is less than one, and may range from about one percent to about fifty percent. Thus, the driving device on the bus know the equalization current based on the equalization coefficient set on the auxiliary driver. In one embodiment, the drivers 705 and 720 and the delay element 718 of Figure 9 may be represented as an FIR filter, where the input signals from the encoder 702 are sent to the filter, which operates on the signals to output a filtered signal.

10 Equalization techniques similar to those described above for the attenuation can be used to compensate for crosstalk and reflection errors. Figure 10 and Figure 11 including Figures 11A, 11B, 11C, 11D and 11E, show a general system using a self equalization FIR filter 806 and crosstalk (XTK) equalization FIR 804 and crosstalk equalization FIR filter 802 for filtering errors on a line V(n) due to crosstalk from 15 adjacent lines A₁(n) through A_J(n), respectively, to produce equalized output V_{OUT}(N).

Figure 11A shows a step function signal 900 on the line A₁ that generates, as shown in Figure 11B, a transient signal 902 in line V due to inductive coupling. Figure 11C shows an equalization signal 904 that is generated by inputting the signal 20 900 to the crosstalk equalization FIR filter 804 to compensate for transient signal 902. Capacitive crosstalk generated in line V from lines A₁ through A_J can be equalized in a similar fashion. Both inductive and capacitive crosstalk may generate a transient signal having a polarity dependent upon the location of the receiver compared to the

location at which the transient signal was generated. Figure 11D shows a first signal component 906 that may be used to compensate for such an inductive or capacitive crosstalk error, which is a scaled and inverted function of the signal 900 that generated the error. Figure 11E shows a second signal component 908 that may be added to the 5 signal 906 to create the crosstalk equalization signal 904 of Figure 11C. The signal 908 can be scaled or a fractional function of signal 900 that is delayed one bit period.

Figure 12 illustrates an exemplary electrical schematic 900 that may be coupled to a device illustrated in Figure 9 and can be used to equalize inductive or capacitive errors created by signals in line 728 and sensed in lines that are adjacent to 10 the line 728. A first crosstalk equalization driver 905 receives signals along lines P1, P2 and P3 that have been inverted by inverters 910 controlling current sources 711, 712, and 713. The combined current from the current sources 911, 912, and 913 is output on a crosstalk equalization line 920 that is connected to an adjacent line, not shown, that is subjected to crosstalk errors from the line 728. The output on the line 15 920 from the driver 905 is thus scaled and inverted compared to the signal produced by the main driver 705, much like the signal 906 of Figure 11D is a scaled and inverted compared to the signal 900 in Figure 11A.

A second crosstalk equalization driver 925 receives input signals along lines X1, X2, and X3 that have been delayed by the delay 715, where the lines X1, X2 and 20 X3 control the current sources 921, 922 and 923. Thus, the output of the second crosstalk equalization driver 925 on the line 920 is delayed and scaled compared to the signals produced by the main driver 705, much like the signal 908 of Figure 11E is scaled and delayed compared to the signal 900 in Figure 11A. The combined output

of the crosstalk equalization driver 905 and 925 on the line 920 is much like the signal 904 of Figure 11C, which can be used to compensate for the transient signal 902 of Figure 11B. Thus, the crosstalk equalization drivers 905 and 925 can compensate for the crosstalk inflicted by the line 728 on nearby lines. Similarly to the equalization 5 cancellation, the crosstalk cancellation employs a predetermined crosstalk cancellation current based on the crosstalk coefficients used in the system. More information on alternative embodiments for equalization and crosstalk cancellation may be found in the co-pending U.S. Patent Application Serial No. 09/654,643, entitled “Low Latency Equalization in Multi-Level, Multi-Line Communication Systems,” identified above.

10 The preferred embodiments, however, are applicable to systems using other types of equalization and crosstalk cancellation, and the invention should not be construed as being limited to systems that include equalization and crosstalk cancellation.

As mentioned in reference to Figure 8, in order to compensate for attenuation, crosstalk or reflection errors using, for example, the equalization drivers illustrated in 15 Figure 12, the highest output logic state is reduced below the V_{TERM} and the lower logic states are shifted respectively based on the equalization and/or crosstalk currents that are used on a device to compensate for signal errors. In such an embodiment, the V_{REFHI} , V_{REFM} and V_{REFLO} are no longer centered on the shifted data eyes, and, thus do not track errors associated with the current control.

20 Typically, an electronic device on a bus, such as the bus 302 illustrated in Figure 1, does not set its equalization or crosstalk coefficients until it is assigned to a predetermined signal line, or a signal channel, such as one of the signal lines 320-1 or 320-2 illustrated in Figure 1. However, when a device is put on a signal line, the

device adapts a predetermined set of equalization and/or crosstalk coefficients based on the characteristics of the signal line. Thus, any device on the bus, once put on a signal line, has a direct knowledge of its default and crosstalk currents that shift the logic states down in order to allow equalization and crosstalk signals to overdrive logic state transitions. In accordance with a preferred embodiment, the reference voltage levels are shifted correspondingly to the logic state shifts so that the reference voltage levels provide accurate threshold levels.

Exemplary embodiments for reference voltage generation will be described hereinafter in reference to a 4-PAM system. However, it should be understood that 10 the exemplary embodiments are equally applicable in 2-PAM or N-PAM systems.

Figure 13 illustrates a 4-PAM voltage generator 1000 that generates the multi-PAM reference voltages V_{REFHI} , V_{REFM} and V_{REFLO} from the external voltage V_{TERM} supplied on a voltage pin 1002 using a voltage divider, where the reference voltage levels reflect the shifts in the logic state level shifts in a system employing 15 equalization and/or crosstalk signals. The voltage divider, including series-connected resistors R1, R2, R3, and R4, is coupled between the voltage pin 1002 supplying the V_{TERM} and a voltage pin 1006 supplying a V_{GROUND} .

According to an embodiment illustrated in Figure 13, one or more active devices on a channel, such as an active device 1004, level-shifts the reference voltage 20 levels based on the logic state shifts. As mentioned in the preceding paragraphs, the logic states are shifted down based on predetermined equalization and crosstalk currents applied by a device on a bus. As illustrated in Figure 13, the active device 1004 includes an active current source generating an offset current (“ I_{OFFSET} ”) that is

controlled by one or more current control signals (“CCS”) 1016. In one embodiment, the CCS 1016 is controlled by a set of equalization and crosstalk coefficients used by a device on the bus so that the active device 1004 draws a scaled amount of the current used for the highest logic state equalization and crosstalk cancellation. In an embodiment, a scale factor associated with the equalization and crosstalk current corresponds to a ratio of the termination resistor Z_O and the first resistor $R1$ of the voltage divider. In such an embodiment, the I_{OFFSET} is equal to $I_{EQ,XTC} \cdot (Z_O/R1)$, where the $I_{EQ,XTC}$ corresponds to a combined equalization and crosstalk current used by a device on a bus. Thus, the active device 1004 pulls down the reference voltage levels V_{REFHI} , V_{REFM} and V_{REFLO} according to the voltage shifts of the logic states. Table 2 illustrates reference voltage levels for the 4-PAM device that may be implemented using the active device illustrated in Figure 13.

Reference Voltage Level	Output Voltage
V_{REFHI}	$V_{REFHI} = V_{TERM} \left(\frac{R2 + R3 + R4}{R1 + R2 + R3 + R4} \right) - R1 \cdot I_{OFFSET}$
V_{REFM}	$V_{REFM} = V_{REFHI} \left(\frac{R3 + R4}{R2 + R3 + R4} \right)$
V_{REFLO}	$V_{REFM} = V_{REFHI} \left(\frac{R4}{R2 + R3 + R4} \right)$

Table 2.

According to the output voltage levels illustrated in Table 2, the active device 1004 pulls a predetermined amount of current from the V_{REFHI} level based on the equalization and crosstalk settings used on a device. Further, as illustrated in Table 2, the lower reference voltage levels V_{REFM} and V_{REFLO} are shifted based on the V_{REFHI}

level so that the new levels for the V_{REFM} and V_{REFLO} provide accurate threshold levels for the logic states below the highest logic state.

However, it should be understood that more than one active device could also be used, and the present invention is not limited to the use of a single active device.

- 5 In a bi-directional or multi-drop bus, e.g. a memory bus, having a number of individual drivers, each with different equalization or crosstalk coefficients, each driver on a channel may have an active device to shift the reference voltage levels. In such an embodiment, the amount of current to make the V_{REF} shift may be equal to a ratio of that current to the equalization/crosstalk component so that the current is
- 10 properly ratioed.

Further, it should be understood that the reference voltage generation according to an exemplary embodiment is not limited to using the voltage generator 1000 illustrated in Figure 13.

- Figure 14 is an electrical schematic 1050 of a multi-level voltage generator 15 that reflects logic state shifts due to equalization or crosstalk cancellation and utilizes the op-amp drive references illustrated in Figure 4. As illustrated in Figure 14, one or more active current sources, such a current source 1052, generates an offset current (“ I_{OFFSET} ”) that is controlled by one or more CCS 1054. The current source 1052 shifts the reference voltage levels based on equalization or crosstalk cancellation
- 20 parameters. In the illustrated embodiment, the offset current pulls down the op-amp reference voltage levels as discussed in greater detail in reference to Figure 13.

Figure 15 illustrates an alternative embodiment of an electronic circuit 1100 that generates level-shifted reference voltages V_{REFHI} , V_{REFM} , and V_{REFLO} via on-chip

V_{REF} drivers. An output driver 1144 drives signals to an output pad 1146 and over a transmission line having a characteristic impedance Z_O 1118 that is substantially matched to a terminating resistor R_{TERM} to minimize reflection. The output driver 1144 may include three current sources, as illustrated in Figure 3, which together 5 produce a current I 1130 when all are active, pulling the voltage at the pad 1106 down from V_{TERM} by $I \cdot Z_O$, signaling the logical state 10 under the Gray code system, as illustrated in Figure 2. To produce the remaining logical states, some of the transistors in the current drivers are deactivated, as described in reference to Figure 2.

Figure 15 illustrates three additional drivers for generating the V_{REFHI} , V_{REFM} , 10 and V_{REFLO} . For example, the current driver 1156 drives into a terminating resistor R_{TERM} 1112 half of the current that would normally be driven to generate the logical state 01 under the Gray code system and, further, shifts the V_{REFHI} level according to the equalization and crosstalk currents applied on the chip. Thus, the current driver 1134 drives a current $I/6$ to generate the V_{REFHI} level that is further shifted by the 15 current driver 1136 to compensate for the equalization and crosstalk.

Similarly, to generate the V_{REFM} voltage level, a current driver 1158 drives into a terminating resistor R_{TERM} 1114 three-fourths of the current that would normally be driven to generate the logical state 11 under the Gray code system, and, further, shifts the V_{REFM} level according to the equalization and crosstalk current applied on the 20 chip. Thus, the current driver 1140 drives a current $I/2$ to generate the V_{REFM} level that is further shifted by the current driver 1142 to compensate for the equalization and crosstalk. Finally, as illustrated in Figure 15, to generate the V_{REFLO} voltage level, a current driver 1160 drives into a terminating resistor R_{TERM} 1114 five-

sixth of the current that would normally be driven to generate the logical state 10 under the Gray code system and, further, shifts the V_{REFLO} level according to the equalization and crosstalk currents applied on the chip. Thus, the current driver 1140 drives a current $5/6 \cdot I$ to generate the V_{REFLO} level that is further shifted by the current driver 1146 to compensate for the equalization and crosstalk. According to one embodiment, the equalization currents 1136, 1142 and 1146 are equal to the voltage shift used to compensate for crosstalk and equalization.

Two reference current generation techniques have been described in reference to Figures 13, 14 and 15. However, any one of those could be eliminated, and an off-chip voltage divider could be used instead. In such an embodiment, for example, the V_{REFM} could be used from a 2-PAM-compatible-style board.

Referring to Figure 16, a method 1200 for generating at least one reference voltage level for a driver employing equalization and crosstalk cancellation will be described.

At step 1202, a reference voltage generator generates at least one reference voltage. For example, in a 2-PAM system, the voltage generator generates one reference voltage, and in a 4-PAM system, the voltage generator generates three reference voltage levels. In one embodiment, the voltage generator may include the reference voltage generators described in reference to Figure 13, 14 or 15; however, different voltage generators could also be used.

At step 1204, at least one current control signal is determined. The at least one current control signal may include an equalization current control signal, a crosstalk current control signal, or the combination of both.

At step 1206, at least one reference voltage level generated by the reference voltage generator is adjusted based on the at least one current control signal determined at step 1204. According to an exemplary embodiment, the at least one reference voltage level is shifted down based on the shift of the highest logic state 5 required by the use of the control signals.

It should be understood that the method 1200 is only an exemplary method, and different or equivalent methods may be used to generate reference voltages based on at least one control signal such as an equalization current control signal or a crosstalk signal.

10 While the invention has been described in connection with a number of preferred embodiments, the foregoing is not intended to limit the scope of the invention to a particular form, circuit arrangement, or semiconductor topology. To the contrary, the invention is intended to be defined by the appended claims and to include such alternatives, modifications and variations as may be apparent to those 15 skilled in the art upon reading the foregoing detailed description.